



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



ZIMMERMAN ZINGS IN A KNUCKLE BALL!

Donning his "Afghanistan Veteran" cap and his "POW/MIA" T-shirt, SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman walked out to the mound to take care of some unfinished business during the Pierre Trappers game Wednesday evening. Wednesday nights game against the Hub City Hotshots was a salute to service.

Before throwing out his pitch, Secretary Zimmerman thanked all those that served (veterans, firemen, policemen, and families). His message was short as the team was ready to play ball, but he expressed the need to work together to care for those who have borne the battle and for their families. He asked all those that serve to stand and ended his comments with "God bless those that serve, their families, and God bless the United States of America."

The Trappers were successful in their 8-7 win

over the Hotshots.

As with any good pitcher, Secretary Zimmerman had some loyal fans to support him in his knuckle ball pitch!



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Mitchell Veterans Park	2
VA Staffing Update.....	3
Soukup Promoted	4
Memorial Day	5
State Veterans Home Update	6
BHNC Memorial Day Program.....	6
Korean Veterans Thanked	7
SDNG Deployment Ceremony.....	7
Mental Health.....	8
VA Acting Secretary	9
34th Annual Golden Coyote.....	9
Upcoming Events	10

MITCHELL VETERANS PARK DEDICATED

Hundreds gathered in Mitchell Saturday for the dedication of their new Veterans Park. A vision that has taken seven years to become a reality.

Guest speaker Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general for the SDNG, commended the community for having the vision and the commitment to build the beautiful memorial. He also thanked all veterans for their service.

Three distinguished guests were honored during the dedication Saturday morning — South Dakota's last surviving Medal of Honor Recipient Mike Fitzmaurice, World War II Veteran Jack Thurman, and Gold Star Mother Blondie Wagner.

SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman was honored to present Jack with one of South Dakota's World War II coins.

A big SHOUT OUT to all that worked on the creation of this outstanding dedication to our heroes!



VA STAFFING UPDATE

Key staffing announcements have been made by Janet Murphy, VISN 23 Director, who will retire next week.

The Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management would like to welcome Mr. Patrick Kelly, MPH, FACHE, to the role as the Acting Network Director for VISN 23 effective May 30, 2018. Mr. Kelly has been the Director for the Minneapolis VA Health Care System since 2013. In that role, Mr. Kelly provided oversight for a complexity level 1a facility and eleven Community Based Outpatient Clinics. Prior to his appointment as the Minneapolis Director, Mr. Kelly was the Director for the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System. Mr. Kelly has served in various roles in Health Administration for the Department of Navy including Chief of Staff for Navy Medicine West in San Diego, California, Assistant Chief of Staff of Health Care Operations for the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in Washington, DC, Commanding Officer for the Naval Health Care New England in Newport, Rhode Island and the Executive Officer, at the Naval Hospital in Bremerton, Washington. Mr. Kelly received his Masters of National Security and Strategic Studies from the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island in 1994. Mr. Kelly is a Fellow of the American College of Health Care Executives (FACHE). His major military awards include: Defense Superior Service Medal; Legion of Merit with three gold stars; Meritorious Service Medal with three gold stars; Navy Commendation Medal and Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with two gold stars.



Effective May 29, 2018, Mr. Darwin Goodspeed will serve as Acting Director, Minneapolis VA Health Care System. Mr. Goodspeed was appointed Director of the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System (HCS) in December 2013. Prior to this appointment, he was Associate Director of the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA HCS in Ohio and Acting Director of the Chalmers P. Wylie Ambulatory Care Center in Columbus, Ohio. Mr. Goodspeed is a retired U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander. He was on active duty for 21 years in a variety of health care leadership positions in the United States and Puerto Rico, and aboard the USS George Washington nuclear aircraft carrier. In 1997, he graduated from the U.S. Army-Baylor University Graduate Program in Healthcare Administration. He is a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives and a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt.



Effective May 29, 2018, Ms. Sara Ackert has been detailed to serve as Acting Director, Sioux Falls VA Health Care System. Sara S. Ackert, BSN, MS was appointed Associate Director for the Sioux Falls VA Medical Health Care System on September 14, 2008. She served as Acting Director from July 2010 – July 2011. Ms. Ackert received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing with emphasis in psychology from Grandview College and her Master's Degree in Health Care Administration from Des Moines University. She is a graduate of the VHA Executive Career Field (ECF) Leadership Development Program and is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). She began her VA career in 1989 as an ICU staff nurse at the VA Central Iowa Health Care System. She held positions of increasing responsibility including Quality Management Specialist, Compliance Officer, Public Affairs Officer, Administrative Officer for the Chief of Staff, and Administrative Officer to the Medical Center Director.



Dan Hubbard, Chief, Fiscal Service, will be detailed as the Acting Associate Director for Sioux Falls.

SOUKUP PROMOTED TO FIRST SERGEANT

The South Dakota Army National Guard's 147th Army Band has promoted its first female to the first sergeant position in the unit's 133-year history during a ceremony, May 2.

First Sgt. Kristen Soukup, of Brookings, was promoted to the unit's senior noncommissioned officer position, where she is now responsible for advising the unit commander on all aspects of the unit's enlisted Soldiers.

Soukup started her National Guard career in 1996, playing the trumpet in the 147th. Recently, she has been one of the main singers for the popular musical performance team Sergeant Rock.

It was a long road, but reaching first sergeant was always in the back of Soukup's mind.

"It's truly an honor to have been chosen as the next first sergeant of the band," said Soukup. "In my 22 years as a member of the 147th, I've had the pleasure of serving with some of the most wonderful soldiers and people. These people are a big part of the reason I'm standing in this position today."

"She is in the position because she is the right person for the position," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Terry Beckler, 147th commander. "With her no-nonsense approach, she will hold the position well."

Former 147th first sergeant, Darold Rounds, was in attendance for the pinning ceremony.

"There are a lot of leaders, but not only was she a musician and leader, she is a real people person," Rounds said about the promotion. "She will do all three things: helping you as a person, a civilian and as a soldier. Congratulations Kristen!"

Soukup is married to Jeff Soukup, also a member of the 147th Army Band, and has three children. In her civilian life, she works as a liability claims adjuster at Great West Casualty Company.

The 147th Army Band provides music throughout the full spectrum of military operations and instills in service members the will to fight and win, fosters support of our citizens and promotes our national interests at home and abroad with performances for open audiences.

Upcoming performances include a couple public performances in Rapid City during June and Downtown at Sundown in Brookings in July.



SDDVA ATTENDS NUMEROUS MEMORIAL DAY

SDDVA Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard served as the keynote speaker at the Memorial Day program in Canistota.



Pictures courtesy
of Matt Anderson
and SDDVA staff.



SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman
served as the keynote speaker at
the DeSmet Memorial Day program
on Monday.



Volunteers from American Legion Posts 8 and
20 assisted Jerry and Myrna Dub with
displaying the Fallen Heroes Banner Exhibit in
the Capitol Lake Visitors Center on Memorial
Day.



Volunteers at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans
Home decorate the graves of our heroes!

MJFSVH UPDATE



The Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home hosted a community Memorial Day program on the campus. Operations Manager Randall Meyers served as emcee for the program.

South Dakota Attorney General, Marty Jackley, was the keynote speaker for the event. In his address, he reminded the crowd about the purpose of Memorial Day, "We are here to remember, thank, and honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice as well as their families."

Following the ceremony, guests were

able to share some stories as they viewed the cars and trucks on display at the annual car show.



Photos courtesy of
Brett Nachtigall / Fall
River County Herald

KIM HONORS KOREAN VETERANS

On Tuesday of this week, Hannah Y. Kim placed commemorative flowers at South Dakota's Korean War Memorial at Capitol Lake in Pierre. Her visit is part of a three-month journey, visiting Korean War memorials in all 50 states, to honor and remember those who served in the Korean War.

Hannah hopes her journey will raise awareness about the Wall of Remembrance, the addition to the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The Wall was approved by Congress in 2016, but lack of funding has delayed its construction for two years. As a result, the names of the nearly 37,000 Americans who died during the Korean War are still waiting to be inscribed for posterity.

Hannah calls all Korean War Veterans, grandpa. She notes if they hadn't fought in Korea she wouldn't be here. She is humbled by the thousands of Americans that fought and died so she could live in freedom.

Pierre American Legion Post 8 presented the colors for the ceremony.



DEPLOYMENT CEREMONY SCHEDULED FOR RAPID CITY GUARD UNIT

A deployment ceremony is scheduled for 25 soldiers with the South Dakota Army National Guard's Detachment 1, Company B, 935th Aviation Support Battalion, Friday, June 8 at 10 a.m. at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center theater.

The public is encouraged to attend the event as the Rapid City-based unit departs for a nine-month deployment to the Middle East to provide aviation maintenance and repair support for U.S. Army rotary aircraft and avionics systems.

Planned speakers for the ceremony include Lt. Gov. Matt Michels, U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem, Rapid City Mayor Steve Allender and Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, SDNG adjutant general.

The unit will report to Fort Hood, Texas, to complete several weeks of theater-specific training prior to deployment overseas.

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, this will be the second mobilization for the unit, which deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2012-2013.

PRESIDENT'S EXECUTIVE ORDER SUPPORTS MENTAL HEALTH CARE

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that the White House has approved an interagency plan to implement President Trump's executive order supporting veterans with mental health care and suicide-prevention resources during their transition from uniformed service to civilian life.

Signed by the president in January 2018, the executive order directs VA, the Department of Defense (DOD), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to collaborate to provide, to the extent consistent with law, seamless access to mental health care and suicide prevention resources for Veterans, with a focus on the first year after separation from military service.

"This collaborative effort represents a critical first step for ensuring that service members transitioning from active duty to Veteran status understand that VA, DOD and DHS are committed to easing the stress of transition by providing the best mental health care possible," said Acting VA Secretary Peter O'Rourke. "Transitioning to civilian life is difficult and, ultimately, this effort will make it easier for our Veterans."

Research has shown that service members in transition to Veteran status are at higher risk of mental health challenges and suicide. The president acted to ensure that new Veterans will receive access to VA mental health care and other services to the extent they are eligible.

Implementation of the Joint Action Plan by the three departments includes 16 important services. Below are three examples:

- Expanding peer community outreach and group sessions in the VA Whole Health initiative from 18 Whole Health Flagship facilities to all facilities. Whole Health includes wellness and establishing individual health goals.
- Extending DOD's "Be There Peer Support Call and Outreach Center" services to provide peer support for Veterans in the year after separation from the uniformed services
- Expanding DOD's Military One Source, which offers resources to active-duty members, to include support to separating service members up to one year after separation.

The White House will closely monitor the outcomes of the Joint Action Plan.



SDNG TO HOST 34TH ANNUAL GOLDEN COYOTE EXERCISE

The South Dakota National Guard will host its 34th annual Golden Coyote training exercise in the Black Hills June 9-23 to provide military units with relevant training opportunities in support of overseas contingency operations and homeland defense.

Created in 1984 with the cooperation of the National Forest Service and Custer State Park, this year's exercise will allow about 2,100 service members to conduct combat-support and service-support missions in a realistic training environment and provide valuable services to the public.

There will be about 30 military units from 10 states and two foreign nations (Denmark and Canada) participating in the exercise from multiple branches of military service - Army, Navy and Air Force - working together to create an invaluable training experience. Participating units conduct military operations, train on their equipment and employ tactics, and complete various humanitarian missions and engineer projects that help improve the forest and infrastructure of many communities.

Local residents receive numerous benefits from the many engineer projects conducted during the exercise. Units transport timber to Native American communities that use it as firewood, conduct building construction, repair and upgrades, identify hazardous wilderness areas and make them safe for public use, and resurface local roadways that have fallen into disrepair.

Units participate in many training tasks and battle drills such as combat patrols, urban combat operations, land navigation, first aid, casualty evacuation and convoy operations. This provides a valuable opportunity for units to train on skills needed for any future overseas deployment.

Residents should be aware of an increase in military traffic throughout the region and in the communities of Rapid City, Hill City and Custer and can expect an increase in noise levels due to military training. Aircraft will be operating throughout the area and will respond to real-world emergencies during the exercise and remain in an all-hours-ready status. The public is asked to remain at a safe distance from all moving military vehicles and aircraft to prevent injury to personnel or damage to property.

NEW VA ACTING SECRETARY

The White House has named Peter O'Rourke as Acting Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). O'Rourke previously served as VA Chief of Staff and prior to that as executive director of the VA's Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection. He succeeds former Acting Secretary Robert Wilkie, whom the president has selected for nomination as VA Secretary. Wilkie has returned to his prior position at DOD where he serves as Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Jacquelyn Hayes-Byrd will serve as VA Acting Chief of Staff while Mr. O'Rourke serves as Acting Secretary. She previously was VA Deputy Chief of Staff.

In addition, VA Deputy Secretary Thomas G. Bowman is re-entering retirement effective June 15, 2018.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jun 6—PVA NCC Annual Picnic—Sioux Falls PVA Chapter Office—11:45 am (CT)
 Jun 7-10—American Legion State Convention—Spearfish
 Jun 14-17—VFW State Convention—Sioux Falls
 Jun 27—Black Hills Veterans Job Fair—Western Dakota Tech (800 Mickelson Dr.) Rapid City 11:00 am—4:00 pm (MT)
 Jul 4—Independence Day (state offices closed)
 Jul 7—Veterans for Veterans Annual Poker Run—Mitchell Depot—1:00 pm (CT)
 Jul 11—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
 Jul 12—Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Cemetery Grand Opening—Sisseton—11:00 am (CT)
 Jul 13 —VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Education Classroom—Fort Meade—10:00 am (MT)
 Jul 14—VVA SD State Council Third Quarter Meeting—Pierre Post 8 American Legion—11:00 am (CT)
 Jul 14-17—DAV National Convention—Reno, NV
 Jul 21-25—VFW National Convention—Kansas City, MO
 Jul 26—VABHHCS Veterans Town Hall—Post 8 American Legion—Pierre 11:00 am—4:00 pm (CT)
 Aug 20-24—SDDVA Benefits School—Ramkota—Pierre
 Aug 24-30—American Legion National Convention—Minneapolis, MN
 Sept 3—Labor Day
 Sept 14—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—VFW Post 1273—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)
 Oct 10—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—Pierre—8:00 am (CT)
 Nov 16—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs —10:00 am (MT)



Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
 South Dakota Department of the Military <http://military.sd.gov>
 South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>
 Soldiers and Sailors Building - 425 E Capitol Avenue
 Pierre, SD 57501
 Phone: 605-773-8242
 E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us

